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Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting No. 6,
October 26, 1962, 10:00 AM

Director McCone summarized the attached intelligence memorandum, including a statement on the current status of Soviet air readiness.

Mr. McCone described the celebration which took place in Havana following the arrival of the tanker Bucharest which had been allowed to pass the quarantine line because it was carrying only oil, which is not now contraband. He said non-Bloc ships could be used to carry military materials if they had been chartered on a bare boat basis by the Russians.

Mr. Bundy reported that three subcommittees are at work -- one on Berlin, chaired by Paul Nitze, one on forward planning, chaired by Walt Rostow, and one on worldwide communications problems, chaired by William Orrick, who is working closely with the Defense Communications Agency.

Mr. Bundy called attention to the civil defense problem and obtained agreement that no crash program would be undertaken now, although

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preliminary measures are to be initiated. He referred to the amount of sensitive information which has been leaking to the press and urged that information about future actions must be more carefully guarded.

Secretary McNamara reported on the status of the quarantine. The Defense Department was authorized to release information on the boarding of the Lebanese ship, the Marucla, the first dry cargo ship which had been loaded in a Soviet port. In the event that comparisons were made between stopping the Lebanese ship and permitting an East German ship to go through the quarantine line, the point will be made that the East German ship carried only passengers.

Secretary McNamara read a list of Bloc ships and their locations and noted that there would be no intercepts at sea today. The tanker Grazyy is apparently moving but will not cross the line today. He suggested that shortly we should embargo fuel used by bombers and substances from which airplane fuel is made, i.e. petroleum products.

The President suggested that if we decide to embargo bomber fuel, we should also mention the fact that we were embargoing fuel which was contributing to the operational capability of the strategic missiles.

Secretary Rusk asked that POL not be embargoed for at least twenty-four hours in order to avoid upsetting the U Thant talks now under way in New York.

Under Secretary Ball asked for agreement on the embargo of petroleum as the next step in the effort to increase pressures -- the timing of the embargo to be decided later in relation to the New York talks.

Secretary Dillon stated his reservations concerning this course of action. He said it ended up in stopping Soviet ships. Thus, a confrontation with the Russians would not be over the missiles, but over Soviet ships. He believed we should go for the missiles rather than force a confrontation with the USSR at sea.

A decision on adding petroleum to the embargo list was delayed until the political path was decided upon.

Secretary McNamara pointed out that construction on the strategic missile sites in Cuba was continuing. He asked that public announcement be made

of our continuation of air surveillance. He recommended that daylight reconnaissance measures be flown today and a night mission tonight, including the dropping of flares.

Secretary Rusk asked that the night mission not be flown because of the unfortunate effect which it might have on the U Thant negotiations in New York.

Secretary McNamara thought that one way of avoiding reaction to night reconnaissance was to inform the Cubans and the Russians in advance that we were initiating such flights.

Ambassador Stevenson opposed any public announcement of our surveillance activities.

The President directed that we dramatize the fact that the missile buildup in Cuba is continuing. He authorized daylight reconnaissance measures but decided to delay night flights.

Secretary Rusk praised Ambassador Stevenson's UN performance. He urged that USIA keep the pressure on the Cuban people and mentioned the dropping of leaflets over Cuba.

Acting Director Wilson requested that better aerial pictures be made available to USIA for distribution. The President authorized the use of any reconnaissance pictures, including those used by Ambassador Stevenson in his UN speech.

Secretary Rusk summarized political actions now under way. He said the object of the talks with U Thant today was to set up some form of negotiations with the Russians in New York. The objective would be to obtain a commitment from the Russians that there would be no further construction at the missile sites in Cuba, no further Soviet military shipments, the defuzing of existing weapons in Cuba, UN inspection of all nuclear-capable missiles, and an observer corps on the ground in Cuba of 350 technically able inspectors. The U.S. quarantine would continue until a UN quarantine is in place. UN teams would be put into specified Cuban ports. U.S. Navy ships would stay close to all Cuban ports to ensure that there were no landings unknown to the UN inspectors and no cargoes landed anywhere which UN inspectors did not see.

Mr. McCloy stated that our quarantine was vital and should be kept in place until the Russians had accepted all of our conditions.

Secretary Rusk pointed out that we must make clear to U Thant that the quarantine is related to the Soviet missiles rather than to Soviet military shipments to Cuba.

Secretary Rusk felt that it was better for us not to participate in such action as would be necessary if it were done by an organization, i. e. the OAS, to which we belong.

The President noted that the plan proposed by Brazil not only calls for an atomic-free zone in Latin America, but it also encompasses a guarantee of the territorial integrity on all Latin American States. He asked whether we could commit ourselves not to invade Cuba. Secretary Rusk commented that we are committed not to invade Cuba, having signed the UN Charter and the Rio Treaty.

5(2)(2)+ (3) Secretary Rusk read a draft cable

In commenting on the draft cable, Mr. Nitze called attention to the importance of getting Soviet missiles out urgently.

Mr. McCone expressed his dislike of a situation involving continued control of Cuba by Castro. Even if the Soviet missiles are removed, Castro, if he is left in control, will be in an excellent position to undertake the Communization of Latin America.

Secretary Rusk said the present position is that Cuba ties to the USSR are not negotiable. Mr. Bundy pointed out, and the President agreed, that our objective was to get the Soviet missiles out of Cuba.

The President said work on the missile sites has to cease and we have to verify what is going on at the sites every day during the talks in New York. As to the message to Castro, he agreed in general, but wanted to have another look at it. He doubted that it would do any good, but it might be undertaken if done now with the greatest urgency.

Ambassador Stevenson discussed the immediate negotiations now under way with U Thant and the longer talks which would follow if agreement can be reached with the Russians in New York. He said the immediate talks were aimed at getting a 24-48-hour standstill on the missile buildup in Cuba. He acknowledged that in these talks it would be impossible to obtain an agreement to make the weapons inoperable. He wanted to know whether he should seek a standstill on all Soviet arms or only offensive weapons. He would seek to get a commitment that there be no further construction, but it would not be possible to set up a system to ensure that the weapons were made inoperable and kept inoperable. In addition, he needed to know whether in return we would be prepared to suspend the quarantine.

Ambassador Stevenson said the aim of the longer term talks would be the withdrawal from this hemisphere of the strategic missiles and the dismantlement of existing sites. He predicted that the Russians would ask us for a new guarantee of the territorial integrity of Cuba and the dismantlement of U.S. strategic missiles in Turkey.

Mr. McCone disagreed with Ambassador Stevenson's linking of Soviet missiles in Cuba to U.S. missiles in Turkey. He said the Soviet weapons

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in Cuba were pointed at our heart and put us under great handicap in continuing to carry out our commitments to the free world. He urged that we do not drop the quarantine until the Soviet missiles are out of Cuba. He believed that we must keep up the momentum so far achieved by the quarantine.

The President said we will get the Soviet strategic missiles out of Cuba only by invading Cuba or by trading. He doubted that the quarantine alone would produce a withdrawal of the weapons. He said our objective should be to prevent further military shipments, further construction at missile sites, and to get some means of inspection.

Mr. McCone urged that any inspectors sent to Cuba be U.S. inspectors knowledgeable about strategic missiles.

The President said he understood Ambassador Stevenson to be asking for time during which he would try to negotiate the withdrawal of the missiles.

Secretary Rusk doubted that we could get any pre-conditions to negotiation.

Secretary Dillon agreed that the Soviets could not back down merely in return for dropping the quarantine.

Mr. Nitze called attention to the importance of obtaining a guarantee that the nuclear missiles would be disassembled from their launchers.

Mr. Bundy said negotiations for a standstill or a standdown were not enough for our security because we must press, in addition, for guaranteed inspection of Cuba.

Secretary Dillon said we could not negotiate for two weeks under the missile threat which now exists in Cuba.

The President noted that there appeared to be little support for Ambassador Stevenson's plan. If the quarantine would not result in the Soviets withdrawing the missiles, what will we do if negotiations break down?

Mr. Bundy said when the interim 24-48-hour talks fail, then our choice would be to expand the blockade or remove the missiles by air attack.

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General Taylor urged that we increase our reconnaissance activity in order to keep informed as to what was happening in Cuba.

The President decided to delay night reconnaissance missions, at least until the Soviets turn down U Thant's proposal. He also agreed that we should announce publicly that construction work at the missile sites in Cuba was going on and that, therefore, we will continue our aerial reconnaissance flights. The President also wanted attention called by a White House spokesman to his earlier speech which insisted that work at the missile sites in Cuba cease. The President decided that a presentation of the current situation should be made to the Congressional Leaders.

Bromley Smith